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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the current claims with the following set of claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended) A network management system sharable by a plurality of operators, comprising:

a compartmented operating system having a number of compartments corresponding to the ~~plurality~~ number of operators and each compartment having access control;

means for assigning ~~the operators~~ each operator to a respective one of the compartments; and

common operations software;

whereby each operator accesses the network management system via the access control of the compartment assigned to that operator and ~~the~~ each compartment executes in isolation the operations software for its operator.

Claim 2. (currently amended) A network element in a communications system, said network element being sharable by a plurality of operators comprising:

a compartmented operating system having a number of compartments corresponding to the ~~plurality~~ number of operators and each compartment having access control;

means for assigning ~~the operators~~ each operator to a respective one of the compartments; and

common operations software;

whereby each operator accesses the network element via the access control of the compartment assigned to that operator and ~~the~~ each compartment executes in isolation the operations software for its operator.

Claim 3. (original) The network element as defined in claim 2 wherein administration of said compartmented operating system is separated into multiple roles.

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Claim 4. (original) The network element as defined in claim 3 wherein one of said multiple roles is dedicated to creating compartments for respective operators.

Claim 5. (original) The network element as defined in claim 3 wherein one of said multiple roles is dedicated to operator administration in each compartment.

Claim 6. (original) The network element as defined in claim 2 wherein said operations software is application software.

Claim 7. (original) The network element as defined in claim 2 wherein said operators are remote from said network element.

Claim 8. (currently amended) A method of controlling access to a network element in a communications system wherein said network element is sharable by a plurality of operators, said method comprising:

providing a compartmented operating system having a number of compartments corresponding to the ~~plurality~~ number of operators and each compartment having access control;

assigning ~~the operators~~ each operator to a respective one of the compartments; and
providing common operations software;

whereby each operator accesses the network element via the access control of the compartment assigned to that operator and ~~the~~ each compartment executes in isolation the operations software for its operator.